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The Problem with Burning Down Your Own House

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The Problem with Burning Down Your Own House

Abstract

...is shivering in the front yard in your underwear, pretending you're as upset as everyone else while the world watches; hoping no one smells kerosene on your breath.

Cover Page Footnote

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September 16, 2016

The Problem with Burning Down Your Own House

by Amorak Huey

is shivering in the front yard in your underwear,
pretending you're as upset as everyone else
while the world watches; hoping no one smells
kerosene on your breath. The problem
with falling down a curving flight of stairs
is exactly what you think it is: the soft spot
in your skull. There's a word for that:
fontanelle. This is not the same thing
as the smooth white coating on a wedding cake
though it's close. The problem with confusion
is the confusion. The problem with guns
is narrative inevitability: the ending, obvious;
the only mystery, how long it takes
to get there. Same problem with being born.
Same with falling in love. The problem
with passionate long-distance affairs is 9/11
and the subsequent need to show ID at the front desk.
I live in Michigan, which is fine,
except during winter, which is always.
The world continues to get in my way;
that is the problem with geography.
The problem with being white is you're allowed
to forget you're white. The problem with forgetting
is not knowing when it's happening.
The problem with cigarettes is disposal

of the butt; field-stripping's a lost art.
The problem with children is they do
what they're told, or they don't, either way
it's a problem. I poured a half-bottle of gin
into the sink this morning, the problem
with telling you this is now you want
to know why. The problem is, I can't tell you.
Motivation has never been my strong suit.
I also don't believe in intent; all that matters
is outcome. Not every consequence is intended,
there ought to be a rule. I was
going to say something about blood,
or bone, or flesh, but I am afraid
you would have gotten the wrong idea.
The problem is you think this is a narrative.
It's human, this need to find order where none exists.
Fire does not have this problem.

Amorak Huey, a former newspaper editor and reporter, is author of the poetry collection *Ha Ha Ha Thump* (Sundress, 2015) and the chapbooks *The Insomniac Circus* (Hyacinth Girl, 2014) and *A Map of the Farm Three Miles from the End of Happy Hollow Road* (Porkbelly, forthcoming in 2016). He teaches at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. His poems appear in *Best American Poetry 2012*, *The Southern Review*, *The Collagist*, *Ninth Letter*, and elsewhere.